

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, ET, US
SUBJECT: INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT FOR KAGNEW STATION CLOSURE

1. THE FOLLOWING WAS PREPARED BY THE CONGEN FOR INCORPORATION
IN THE "U.S. NAVAL COMMUNICATIONS UNIT ASMARA DETAILED SITE RE-
MOVAL/RELOCATION PLAN 4350(S)" WHICH IS PRESENTLY UNDER PRE-
PARATION BY THE NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA.

2. IT WILL BE IMPERATIVE THAT THE EPMG ACCEPTS IN WRITING A
DETAILED AGREEMENT ON A 30-DAY PHASEOUT OF ALL KAGNEW OPERATIONS
AND PERSONNEL. ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE CLOSURE IS ORDERLY
AND THUS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS AGREED PHASEOUT PLAN,
WE ANTICIPATE THAT THERE ARE THREE GROUPS IN THE LOCAL POLITICAL
SITUATION WHICH MIGHT PLAY A ROLE IN THE PHASEOUT OPERATIONS.
THE FIRST IS THE EPMG FORCES IN ASMARA WHICH WILL BE TASKED WITH
PROVIDING SECURITY AND OTHER APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE IN THE PHASE-
OUT OPERATION. IF THEY HAVE BEEN CLEARLY INSTRUCTED BY HIGHER
AUTHORITY TO COOPERATE IN THE PHASEOUT AND COMPETENT OFFICERS
ARE IN CHARGE, IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THEY WILL BEHAVE CORRECTLY
TO THE LIMIT OF THEIR CAPABILITIES. THE EPMG REGIONAL GOVERNMENT
CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TO THE PHASEOUT AS IT WILL

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(1) ELIMINATE AN ONGOING SECURITY BURDEN, (2) REMOVE THE CAUSE
OF AND THE POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENT OF AN AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE
IN ETHIOPIA, AND (3) CONSTITUTE A WINDFALL OF MATERIAL BENEFIT
TO THE EPMG AS THE INHERITORS OF THE PHYSICAL FACILITIES AND
EXCESS PROPERTY. IT IS THIS LATTER ASPECT WHICH CAN BE EXPECTED
TO CREATE A PROBLEM FOR PHASEOUT OPERATIONS. FROM PAST EXPERIENCE,
WE ANTICIPATE THAT THERE WILL BE A POSSIBLY DISORDERLY SCRAMBLE

AMONG THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE EPMG FORCES FOR THIS EXCESS PROPERTY TO BE TURNED OVER TO THE EPMG. IN PARTICULAR, THE OIC WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE CALLED UPON TO ADJUDICATE HOW THIS PROPERTY IS TO BE DIVIDED; A ROLE WHICH HE MUST AVOID AT ALL COSTS. TO PRECLUDE THIS PROBLEM AND TO FACILITATE THE PHASEOUT, AN EXPERIENCED EPMG OFFICER SHOULD BE ASSIGNED TO THE OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR TO CONDUCT ALL LIAISON FUNCTIONS AND HE SHOULD BE EMPOWERED TO INTERVENE WHEN NECESSARY TO PREVENT DISCORD. IT IS FURTHER ANTICIPATED THAT THIS SCRAMBLE FOR EXCESS PROPERTY WILL INTENSIFY AS THE PHASEOUT OPERATION APPROACHES ITS CONCLUSION, FURTHER INCREASING THE POTENTIAL FRICTION WITH THE EPMG TROOPS. THE SECOND GROUP WHICH MIGHT PLAY A ROLE IN THE PHASEOUT IS THE CIVIL POPULATION OF ASMARA. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE AMERICANS AT KAGNEW AND THE CIVIL POPULATION HAVE ALWAYS BEEN CORDIAL. IT CAN BE EXPECTED THAT THE POPULATION OF ASMARA WILL BE DISAPPOINTED BY THE PHASEOUT, ALTHOUGH IT WILL NOT TRANSLATE THIS DISAPPOINTMENT INTO OVERT ACTS OF OBSTRUCTIONISM. THERE MAY BE A SPATE OF UNSETTLED CLAIMS WHICH WILL AGAIN BE REVIVED, MOST OF WHICH CAN BE SUMMARILY DISMISSED. PHASEOUT WILL MEAN THE LOSS OF ABOUT 100 JOBS FOR THE ERITREANS, A FACT WHICH MAY SPARK SOME BITTERNESS. CONDITIONS FOR THE TERMINATION OF THESE EMPLOYEES SHOULD BE INCORPORATED IN THE PRE-PHASEOUT AGREEMENT WITH THE EPMG, THEREBY MINIMIZING THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS BITTERNESS. THE LAST GROUP IN THE EQUATION IS THE ERITREAN INSURGENTS. ALL AVAILABLE EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT THE INSURGENT LEADERSHIP WOULD WELCOME THE CLOSURE OF KAGNEW. THE LEADERSHIP OF THE MARXIST EPLF WOULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO TOLERATE THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF A WESTERN MILITARY FACILITY. LIKEWISE, ONE OF THE CONDITIONS EXPOUNDED BY THE INSURGENTS FOR THE RELEASE OF THE U.S. MILITARY HOSTAGES

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KIDNAPPED IN SEPTEMBER, 1975, WAS THAT THE USG CLOSE KAGNEW. A FURTHER ELEMENT IN THE INSURGENTS' THINKING IS THAT THE REMOVAL OF THE U.S. FACILITY MARKS A WEAKENING OF THE U.S.-ETHIOPIAN BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, AND PARTICULARLY A DIMINISHMENT OF THE LONG-STANDING MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. FOR THESE REASONS WE ESTIMATE THAT THE INSURGENTS WILL NOT INITIATE ANY ACTIONS SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED AT IMPEDING THE KAGNEW PHASEOUT.
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